

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL MARGARET BURCHAM,
COMMANDER, GULF REGION NORTH DISTRICT; JOANNE MILO, DEPUTY DISTRICT ENGINEER,
GULF REGION SOUTH DISTRICT VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ SUBJECT: ARMY CORPS OF
ENGINEERS TIME: 11:00 A.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2009

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LINDY KYZER (Army Public Affairs): (In progress) -- with that, we'll
go ahead and get started again. This is Lindy Kyzer with Army Public Affairs.
Very pleased to have with us Colonel Margaret Burcham.

Thank you so much, ma'am, for joining us.

She's a commander of the Gulf Region North District. And also Joanne
Milo. She's a deputy district engineer for the Gulf Region South District.

They're going to take your questions. They're here to discuss their
careers with the Army Corps of Engineers. I believe both of them have spent
over 20 years working for the U.S. Army, so I'm sure they have a lot to tell
you. So without further adieu, I will turn it over to Colonel Burcham, if you
have any opening remarks or just to introduce yourself.

COL. BURCHAM: All right, yes. As you've said, I've got a long career
with the military. I started out right out of high school, attended the United
States Military Academy, and so that's kind of formed my whole adult life. And
it's been an absolutely fantastic career opportunity. I'm very pleased and
satisfied, excited with the opportunities that I've had to be a leader and an
officer in the Army. And you know, I'm just right in one of the capstone
positions of my career as a second command at the colonel level, commanding
soldiers and civilians here in Iraq, doing great things for the Iraqi people,
reconstructing their facilities. And it's very satisfying work. And I'm
excited to be here, and I'm very happy to share any thoughts about that that you
might be interested in.

MS. KYZER: Wonderful. Thanks so much, ma'am.

And then I'll also turn it over to Ms. Joanne Milo for any remarks you
might have.

MS. MILO: Good evening, or good morning to whomever that applies.
This is Joanne. And yeah, just a little bit on my background real quick. I've
been with the Army Corps of Engineers for 23 years. My home district is the
Chicago District. And I started there as an engineer intern a long time ago, so
I have a very special place in my heart for new interns that join the corps.
The corps has been great to me. They've provided stability and career

opportunities, been very supportive, and I'm just very glad to be here. This is my second deployment over here. First time over here I was a program manager. I'm actually a project manager back home. So after being an engineer intern, I worked up through the engineering chain into project management. So having the opportunity to come over here as a deputy for Programs and Project Management has just been fantastic. And I'll get into more detail about that as we go along. But thanks. Happy to be participating.

MS. KYZER: Wonderful. Thank you so much. We'll go ahead and begin with Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal.

Chuck.

Q Good evening, ladies. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. I'm going to start out with a dumb question because I followed what the corps has done in Iraq, and I've checked on the website and stuff and I just haven't ever really found a good explanation of how the Corps of Engineers integrates with the Army itself. I know there are combat engineers. I know there are engineering units. But I don't know how those functions and the Army Corps of Engineers are related or unrelated and what function the corps serves for the military versus the civilian side. COL. BURCHAM: Okay. Did you have a particular one of us you wanted to answer that?

Q Whichever one of you would like to. It doesn't matter to me.

COL. BURCHAM: Okay. This is Colonel Burcham, and I'll be happy to start on that one, and Joanne can add to it.

But first of all, you're right, there's sort of two different sides to the engineer regiment or family in the Army. You have your tactical units, your combat engineers which include both combat engineers, as we call them, which handle maneuverability, making sure roads are clear, for instance, or countermobility which would emplace, for instance, mine fields to keep the enemy from going a certain direction.

And then we have combat-heavy engineers which do construction, and they would do tactical construction. So soldiers would build, for instance, field-type facilities for the use of their unit, or they might do tactical bridging so that like, for instance, tanks could cross a river.

And then on the other side you've got the Corps of Engineers which is essentially a civilian organization led by military leaders who come from those other organizations I've just described. And so there's a little bit of a melding in that sense. But the Corps of Engineers is handling both civil works which would be like your dams and coastal waterways, for instance, and also doing what we call military construction which is a specific kind of appropriation by Congress to build facilities for the military. And we would build those at bases throughout the U.S. plus anywhere that U.S. troops are stationed overseas. In fact, here in Iraq, we do military construction on the bases. And the types of that construction would be, for instance, a dining facility for the soldiers to use. Or it might be an air field runway for the Air Force, you know, airplanes to use.

So we're joining together in that sense. The Corps of Engineers is providing military facilities for our military. And then also here in Iraq, we're providing military facilities for the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police. So that's another little twist to the type of work we do.

And if I could just say a little bit more, one of the fascinating aspects of my work here in Iraq, that I just really love, is the ability for the Corps of Engineers, our district, to interact with the engineer soldiers that come from those tactical units. And that's because we're all living together, stationed together in bases where we can readily mix with each other. We take advantage of training opportunities, professional development. And in fact, for instance, we are doing construction where the military units will get a specific kind of funding called the Commanders Emergency Relief Program to do work to help the Iraqis. And they will come to the Corps of Engineers where we have some highly developed engineering expertise and ask us to help them do that construction for the Iraqis. So we will partner together with the tactical units to do that construction. And sometimes, we'll actually take some of the soldiers from those combat-heavy construction units, who have some expertise in construction, to work side-by-side with us as we work with civilian contractors to make sure they're complying with the requirements of the contracts that we establish to do the construction.

And that's just a very broad-brushed view, but we are, at all levels of our organization, we are integrating together. And it's really fun, and it's just a great opportunity for soldiers to get more development and for our civilians to have a chance to work alongside their military counterparts that they wouldn't normally have so much opportunity for.

Joanne.

MS. KYZER: Did you have any thoughts on that, Joanne?

MS. MILO: Yes. I'm sorry. I couldn't tell if that was my name. (Laughs.) But yes, yeah, I think that's a very good overview from Colonel Burcham.

Just a couple of other things that I want to add as far as the Iraqi security forces that we do help to work with getting these projects constructed.

And at the same time, we've had an opportunity to build some really great relationships with the Iraqi security forces. For example, we live on a U.S. airbase. However, right next door to us, we have a military Army facility called Camp Ur. And we've developed some very good relationships with them to the point that, well, not only do we do construction over there and also work together to find out what the security situation is and we all kind of watch out for each other, but we've used their theater, their training facilities to hold contracting conferences over there where we bring contractors in and give them workshops and help train them and build their capacity to obtain work from us, to learn about our contracting procedures so they could get more jobs.

And one contracting conference we held over there was really quite an outstanding experience for me because as we were standing outside the theater, they had all these young men out there marching up and down the streets. I got the feeling they were kind of showing off because they knew we were going to be there that that. So there were all these young men, up close and personal, these young Iraqi men in their brand-new uniforms, marching up and down the street. And they even had the marching band. And we were just fascinated by that. And you know, they let us take pictures and so forth, and it was really just kind of an exciting moment in history to be standing there and saying, wow, here I am watching this brand-new Iraqi army stand up and get trained, and they look so proud and their young faces, and it was just really an incredible

moment. So even though we do all this work, you have these wonderful personal moments like that that you take away and say, wow, what a fantastic experience this is.

And another real wonderful opportunity that I've had is to work on a foreign military sales project. We're helping to have a pier and seawall project constructed down at the Port of Umm Qasr. And now the navy is the smallest of all the military units over here, the Iraqi navy, but we were able to enter into this agreement. What's really cool about this project is that it is Iraqi money. So for us, it's the first FMS project, foreign military sales, that we've done. So all eyes have been on us. So we wanted to make sure we were doing everything right, right from the start. So we've been meeting with what they call the HON, the head of navy, and his commanders and so forth and commodores and having partnering sessions with them as we went through the design process. So that was pretty cool when they show up to their meetings in their crisp uniforms, and it's just very exciting opportunities that you wouldn't normally get in this job back home.

So I just wanted to throw in that sort of aspect of it, too.

MS. KYZER: Great. And -- (inaudible) -- with My Side of the Puddle, did you have a question?

Q Yes, thank you. To tell you the truth, I had no idea that Iraq had a navy, so that is very interesting.

COL. BURCHAM: It's under 1,000 sailors.

Q Is it?

COL. BURCHAM: Yeah, they've got some nice little patrol boats and some marines, and that's about it.

Q Very cool. My question pertains to just -- well, actually, I've got a couple of things. In the civilian world, women are not very welcomed in technical areas, like engineering. I personally, I'm in finance, and it's been a hard row. Those are not, you know, typical female-oriented positions. But you guys have both seemed to have risen to the top. And I'm wondering if you have ever felt like your gender has been an issue.

COL. BURCHAM: I'll jump in. This is Colonel Burcham. Actually, I wouldn't say that I've ever felt not welcome before. I would say certainly when I went to West Point and I was the third class and there was some elements there where we maybe weren't welcome because it was just such a complete change to tradition. But ever since I got out of West Point, was commissioned and served as an officer, I've never felt uncomfortable, unwelcome. And quite frankly, I mean, and I can't compare it to the civilian world because I haven't done that. I think the Army certainly has bent over backwards to make great opportunities for me. And I've tried to take full advantage of everything I can. I think it's opened lots of doors, and the system is very fair. The promotion system, selection to, you know, special positions like command I don't think could be much more open, transparent and fair process, you know, if you've got what it takes, if you're willing to do the extra effort.

I mean, maybe, you know, I'm sure there's times you could say we have to work harder to prove ourselves. I wouldn't deny that. But if you're willing to go that extra step, I feel the opportunities have been there. And again, I

guess if you -- I mean, I've worked with men mostly my entire career. And generally, I find that men have great respect for women that work hard and will, you know, go toe-to-toe with them at, you know, whatever they're doing. And it's more the effort than necessarily the success or results. And if they see you're putting in effort, they'll accept you. So I mean, I've generally had a very positive experience. Q That's good.

MS. MILO: Yeah, and this is Joanne. And speaking from the civilian aspect, I got a little bit of that. It's funny. I got a little bit of that. My first job out of college, I went to work offshore in the Gulf of Mexico on a geophysical survey ship. And throughout college, I mean, you know, it was an engineering school so, you know, 80 percent of the students were male. I grew up with an older brother. My dad was always supportive of me being independent. So it was no big deal for me to go to school and work side-by-side, study, whatever, and be surrounded by a lot of males. I didn't think anything of it. I grew up trying to follow my brother and all of his friends around.

But when I went to work offshore, we had a client from an oil company, who gave me a heck of a lot of grief and, I mean, even so much as saying, you know, you are taking away a job from a man who could be supporting his family. But then when I came to work for the Corps of Engineers -- and I think there's something about government service where they really focus on diversity. I just haven't ran into that again.

And being in the Chicago area, you have a lot of people from very diverse cultures and backgrounds and a lot of blending going on. And I've always been a strong thinker that as far as diversity goes, you know, the more people that you bring into your pool from diverse areas, you know, it reflects the society that we live in. And so you're going to get that reflection mirrored and provide your customers with what it is that they want. You know, you look like them, they look like you, and you're a pool of diverse people, and you bring people in who think differently, and you all learn and grow.

And like I said, the corps has been very supportive to me throughout my career. I'm here and, you know, it's just really been a fantastic opportunity. Nobody has ever tried to block me or stop me. And as a matter of fact, after I leave here, I was just offered a promotion back in the Louisville District, so I'll be moving on to, you know, even a more fantastic opportunity.

And here, our present civilian staff, we have about 95 civilians on our staff here at GRS right now, and about 30 percent of them are all females. So I think the corps is just a great opportunity for females to be working here.

Q Maybe I need to join the Army and get out of the civilian world then, huh?

MS. MILO: (Laughs.)

COL. BURCHAM: Well, you'd be welcome.

MS. KYZER: Well, we need a recruiter on the line. Goodness sakes, of course. I'll give you the paperwork now. Q I was working for an investment company, and I took a phone call, a guy who insisted on talking to a man and told me I needed to go back to the kitchen where I belonged. So yeah, so I'm very glad to hear that you are not experiencing that, either one of you experienced anything close to that in the Army. So that's good. Thank you.

MS. KYZER: And we'll go back to Chuck. Did you have any other questions.

Q Oh, I've got a bunch. First of all, Joanne, if you could repeat your numbers for civilians and percentage females at South.

And then, Colonel, if you could give me the same numbers for the North.

MS. MILO: Yeah. This is Joanne. I think it's about -- you know, we fluctuate a little bit because people come in and people leave. But I think the current numbers right now it comes out to 30 percent. We have about 28 females of a 94 civilian staff.

Q Okay. And Colonel, do you know how many civilians and what percent are females in North?

COL. BURCHAM: I do. Let me go over our whole structure. As far as what we call Department of the Army civilians, we have about 81 today. And of those, you know, I don't have the exact figure with me, but I would say it's about 20 to 25 women. Now, I will tell you, honestly, they don't tend to be in the senior positions. I don't have a senior civilian like Joanne that's a woman. Most of the women tend to be in the what we call secretarial-type positions and then the Resource Management, like chief of Resource Management which is a supervisory position is a woman.

In fact, her whole staff is women. And my chief of Contracting is a woman and several of her employees.

But you know, quite frankly, no, our engineers don't tend to be women because women, as noted before, they don't gravitate towards the engineering field as much as we would like.

I would like to note we have about 46 Iraqi national employees. They are people we've hired locally to work for us. And we have one that's a woman architect and one that's a woman secretary. So that's pretty neat. And then we've got 36 military. And of those, we've got two of us women, soon to be three. So yeah, our numbers aren't big. But you know, generally, throughout the Army, we tend to be, I think, about roughly 18 percent of the military. So you know, women are certainly all around us.

Q All right. Okay. To go back to corps activities, if I could, I've seen the Army Corps of Engineers involved in some projects that are not typical corps projects, so they've actually, I think, increased the number of competencies that you guys have had to have. So if you could speak to what might be the most unusual project you've been involved with.

And also, about a year or a year and a half ago, we spoke with a gentleman from the corps. And he said that one of the problems he was having at that time was getting the Iraqi industries up to speed. For example, he was having to import all his concrete because the various ministries couldn't agree on how to open concrete plants. So if you could speak to if the Iraqi industrial infrastructure has improved enough to support the construction going on.

COL. BURCHAM: Do you want to take that, Joanne?

MS. MILO: Sure. As far as the contractors and their capability which, I think, is what was the first part of what you said, that's always a little bit of a challenge for us to help mentor, coach the Iraqi contractors. They're used to doing business differently and, you know, the whole competitive bidding and so forth. So that is a challenge, the gentleman you talked with a couple of years ago. This is kind of an ongoing challenge, but we have noticed the more proposals that we get in, the competency has been improving. You know, it's been, I think, a slow go. This is actually my second deployment over here. Things are much better now than they were when I was over here previously.

Q So you're able to obtain supplies within Iraq now that formerly you might have had to import?

MS. MILO: Well, I know they are setting up concrete batch plants now more readily. Actually, we're kind of fortunate because here on the base that we live there is a concrete batch plant that does a lot of manufacturing right here. But that makes it easy for our projects that are all on base.

But there are still -- some of the things that I think are the tougher things to get are some of the very specialized, long-lead items such as for the electricity projects. You know, there are some components that are manufactured outside in Turkey and places like that or, I don't know, other places. And it just sometimes can take six months to get the right component manufactured and shipped in. So there still are some challenges. And asphalt is another one. We still struggle a little bit with asphalt because that's controlled by the ministries and so forth. So that's slowed down our road projects.

But most of the materials they can get pretty readily to build buildings, so we can get buildings up and running pretty quickly. So I don't think that that's so much of a challenge to get the materials as maybe to make sure you're getting the right contractor to do the work.

Q Okay. And what would be the most unusual project that you might have been involved with?

MS. MILO: Oh, let's see. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

COL. BURCHAM: Well, I was just going to say I've got one for you on that, which we really scratch our head over this one, and it's quite interesting, and it's related to your question about developing capacity, you know, because they don't manufacture much here. So yeah, the supplies aren't readily available in the country. And most stuff does have to get imported except for like concrete block and the concrete and asphalt.

But as far as the other issue that is lacking is just technical capability. And the people aren't trained to do the work. So we're trying to figure out how do we, you know, increase the capability of the workers so they can get jobs. You know, we're trying to help the unemployment situation which is especially high like where I am right now in Tikrit area. It's like 60 percent unemployment. So there's a Tikrit university that's existing, and we are working with them to develop a vocational-technical school as part of the university. It's actually the State Department is providing the funding, and we are contracting with the university to provide specific training for Iraqi people. You know, this is not something the Corps of Engineers ever does. And so we're trying to work with the professors to develop the training, you know, the training course and the materials and then figure out, you know, how do you, you know, measure something like that? You know, how do you develop the

plan for the actual contract of something like this training? And how long does it go on? And it's really something that we're not used to doing. And so it's really causing us to sort of stretch and broaden the way we look at things and our understanding.

But it's exciting to think about, you know, the results of getting some people like -- one of the things we're trying to train them in is like how to run a wastewater treatment plant, for instance, because we build all this stuff and then they don't know how to maintain it. Well, part of it is knowing how, and then the other part is having the culture to have the desire to maintain it, which, you know, you can't take for granted because it's different than it is in our culture. And how do we get at that? I mean, it's just really hard stuff.

The easy part is building the buildings, to be quite frank with you. And the hard part is getting them to inculcate them into their world. And another piece of that, by the way, that I talk about is we -- and I know Joanne is doing the same -- but we're working very closely with the Iraqi government engineers and trying to bring them into the process from the beginning. Like, for instance, they have a director general of Education. And that man would be in charge of the schools in his province. And he has engineers who work for him. And if the State Department decides they want to put a school in this village, what we want to do is get with those engineers from the get go and have them part of the process of developing the statement of work for those schools and getting their buy in from the beginning because eventually we're going to turn that school over to them.

And they've got to accept it and believe in it and want to care for it. And so we take them out onto the construction sites with us during the construction and have them, you know, help us, you know, critique the quality, for instance. You know, we can't let them actually deal directly with the contractor. That's our contractual job. But they can, you know, point out things to us. We can, you know, work with them. They can feel like they have input to the whole process and, therefore, buy in. So that, I think, is going to get us a long way towards being more successful for the long term.

Q Great, thank you.

MS. KYZER: Okay. And I know that's bumping over our time. Do you ladies have time for anymore questions, or do you need to wrap up?

MS. MILO: Oh, I was just going to mention real quick just a couple of projects that are a couple of my favorites, if you have time.

MS. KYZER: Yeah. We have all the time in the world. It's your time that matters. MS. MILO: Okay. Well, I was just going to mention, there's one that we have that just kind of makes me chuckle. It's a bee farm. So we're actually, you know, we're putting in a building. And then the bees -- you know, build it, and the bees will come. And all the bee farms that they have here in this area, you know, they are an agricultural area so you have the plant life and so forth to support the bees. But I get such a kick out of that one, we're building the bee farm.

Then we have a couple of projects, a meat market and a fish market which are very nontraditional projects for the Corps of Engineers, but they're to support economic development. So we know they're good for the community. So you know, it makes you feel good when you're contributing to something like that.

But I think the most complex and challenging and one of the most meaningful projects that I've been involved with is the Basra children's hospital. And you may have heard about that, may be more, you know, familiar with it. But that is a children's oncology hospital. It's going to have some very high-tech equipment in there, like a linear accelerator. And it's also -- what makes it challenging is that it has several partner contributors to this. We have Project Hope who is donating about \$30 million worth of training and equipment. We have the United Nations development program, and they're also contributing about \$22 million worth of equipment from donations from the government of Spain. So we have all of these various partners, and things are all being delivered, and there's a lot of coordination that has to go on.

And then the Iraqis themselves have already accepted a lot of responsibility. We've done a partial transfer of responsibility to them. So through the Ministry of Health, there's a group of doctors that are going to be the hospital administrators.

And we had our last working group meeting, and it was very evident that there was a shift in responsibility where these guys came to the table and they actually had the Power Point presentation prepared, they gave the presentation, and then we just kind of stepped back and took more of a supporting role. So they're taking much more ownership. And that's kind of an exciting shift to see because it can be a challenge to get the Iraqis sometimes to step up and take ownership and take responsibility.

In the south, in particular, I think, you have people who, for a long period of time, they weren't allowed to make decisions. They weren't allowed to sign documents. They weren't allowed to think for themselves. And now, all of a sudden, here they are taking on a lot of responsibilities, projects. We're trying to teach them or helping them. And these gentlemen are going a long way, I think, being model examples of how to do that. And they're very brave men and very much feeling that this hospital is going to provide the children in the future a place for cancer treatment that's very valuable to them. So that's just very cool. The whole project is like \$155 million. So it's one of our real what we call a star project. It gets a lot of attention and visibility, very important to us and very important that it's successful and that the Iraqis carry it forward and continue to make it successful. So that's one of my favorites.

Q Great, thank you.

COL. BURCHAM: And I've got one more. This is Colonel Burcham. Joanne talking about her bee house reminded me of our slaughterhouse we're building. I had forgotten about that. But in a village way up in the mountains in Kurdistan, they asked the State Department to provide them a slaughterhouse because typically what they do, of course, in the markets right where they sell the meat they usually slaughter it right there on the sidewalk. And you know, all the messiness runs right down the street. And it's just not very sanitary. So this slaughterhouse which isn't, you know, terribly different from one you might see in the states, I suppose, is located away from the town a little bit and is going to provide a very, you know, sanitary and professional facility for that. So that's kind of different for the corps.

Q Well, Colonel, that's in the area where they've had problems with the bird flu, correct? COL. BURCHAM: Not that I'm aware of. I've been here

since July, and I know it hasn't been an issue that's been brought to my attention. I suppose it could be.

I also wanted to mention, speaking of slaughtering, we started a little late because I had literally just driven in from Kurdistan where we did a very big ribbon-cutting ceremony today. It was quite a lot of fun. My boss, Major General Eyre, was able to attend. And what we were opening was a very large correctional facility that we built. And in keeping with the Iraqi tradition in celebration, as we cut the ribbon, they slaughtered two sheep right at our feet. And that's certainly not something we're used to doing at our normal ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Q Well, are you thinking of beginning the custom on the United States?

COL. BURCHAM: (Laughs.) Yeah, right. It's definitely not something that would go over well with the typical -- I mean, it's not a very pleasant sight, but it was interesting, and it was traditional, and it was their culture.

Q This was a Kurdish government correction facility?

COL. BURCHAM: It's actually an Iraqi national facility that's built in Kurdistan. It will actually house prisoners throughout Iraq, not just Kurdish.

Q Okay, because I know that the Kurdish Regional Government has kind of not participated in a lot of the Multinational Force work. But it sounds like you guys are into the KRG area without any problem.

COL. BURCHAM: Oh, absolutely. I have several offices in the KRG, and we've done, you know, many, many, many projects there. We just opened a very large police academy in Erbil. And again, that police academy will take students from throughout Iraq. I think the bigger percentage will be Kurds, but they're definitely going to open it to the whole country. No, the Kurds have been wonderful to work with. They're very, very appreciative of anything that we do for them. And they give us like top, top support for our work there. They're great hosts.

Q Thank you.

MS. KYZER: Okay. And we're at a good point to wrap up, so I think we'll go ahead and do that now. Hopefully we've got everybody's questions answered. Thank you so much for joining us on the line. Did you have any closing remarks or anything we didn't touch on that you just want to discuss, either Colonel Burcham or Joanne?

MS. MILO: Well, I mean, I just can't emphasize enough what a great experience it's been over here. I think when you're working over here like this and you work this closely with people, the environment here, you know, we're working seven days a week, we work long days. You're away from home and family and so forth, so the people that you work with, you really become a close-knit group and, you know, everybody else goes through the same things about missing home and so forth. So you know that, you know, you get to be rather close. You eat all your meals together. You know, you live very close to where you work, so you see each other all the time and really develop those bonds. And it's a real fantastic experience.

And the military is probably used to doing this type of thing all the time where they get deployed and spending time together and so forth. But as a civilian, it's just been a real outstanding experience for me. So not having family over here, this group has really become a family. And it's just been a wonderful opportunity. And I get real chatty, so I'll go ahead and cut myself off now. (Laughs.) Over.

MS. KYZER: Okay. Colonel Burcham, did you have anything to say?

COL. BURCHAM: Well, yeah, I mean, I could just echo what Joanne has said. I absolutely just love my job. I've loved it from the day I got here, and I haven't gone home yet in eight months, and everything is going fine. Of course, I'm lucky to have a very supportive family at home. And you know, my husband and son are taking care of each other and doing quite well at it, so I don't have to worry about that. But this has just been an extremely fun and positive experience for me. Of course, I came at a time where the security situation is so much better. So while we do have to be very careful and there are dangers, we've been very fortunate that it has had very minimal impact on our personnel.

And I want to say just, you know, it's wonderful to work in a situation where people are here because they want to be here. You know, every one of my civilian employees is here only because they volunteered to come. And they can leave anytime they're not happy. So every day I go out, and I interact with people who are having a great time. And they're motivated, and they're giving it their very best in sometimes, you know, challenging conditions. And you know, what more can you ask for to lead an organization of people that are out, well-resourced with all the money that they need to do their jobs? We have the resources, we have the support of all the people. We have great partnership with Iraqis, with military, with the civilians that support us. And we just need to make the most of it. It's just there for the taking. And that's what I enjoy doing is encouraging us to just reach out and take, you know, make the most of what we've got here and produce something positive with it. And I feel we're doing that. So I'm just very happy to have this opportunity.

MS. KYZER: Wonderful. Thank you so much, ma'am. Thank you to both of you. You were great speakers, and we really enjoyed our time being able to discuss things with you. This concludes the roundtable. Thank you, everyone.

END.